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THE INTER-TESTAMENT LITERATURE.

By Prof. GEORGE H. SCHODDE, Ph. D.,

Columbus, Ohio.

One of the results of modern methods of Bible study has been that the literary remains from the period that intervened between the close of the Old Testament canon and the beginning of the New are regarded with entirely new eyes. They are no longer looked upon as curiosities of literature without any practical value for Scriptural research. They have been discovered to be important sources of information, not only for the understanding of the intellectual and religious development in Israel in that period when their sacred writings had received a recognition as never before, and had become actually, and not only theoretically, the leading factors and forces in this development, but also for the elucidation of contemporary Jewish thought in the days of Christ and the apostles, without which many of the problems of New Testament theology and New Testament exegesis are unintelligible in their entire bearings and import.

The change in the estimate of these writings, which include not only the so-called Apocrypha, i. e. the books found in the Greek but not in the Hebrew Old Testament canon, but also the apocalypses and other writings of both Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism, is owing chiefly to the introduction into modern biblical research of that idea which has been the most fruitful of results, both good and bad, in the scientific investigations of the day, namely, the idea of historical development. The Scriptures are no longer regarded merely as a collection of dogmatical *dicta probantia*, but revelation has been a growth, and one that stands in the most intimate relation to the development of the people in whose midst it became a reality. While it cannot be denied that the modern method of Bible study in its one-sided application has led to naturalizing and naturalistic schemes of the re

ligion revealed in the Scriptures, yet in its legitimately sober application a much more correct idea of the actual course and character of revelation at its various stages has been secured than was possible from the standpoint of former days. In unfolding Scripture not merely as a revelation, but also as the history of a revelation, the inter-Testament literature has a value and importance of its own, even if these writings in a certain sense are only secondary and auxiliary.

It is a matter of considerable discussion as to the extent to which even temporary thought and literature influenced the sacred writings, more particularly those of the New Testament. It has been the function of biblical study in its modern phases and methods to emphasize more than was done by the scholars of an earlier generation the human side of revelation, the human factors, forces and surroundings, whose presence can be detected in the character and contents of the Scriptures. Indeed, in this point probably more than in any other consist the characteristic differences between the former and the present ways of interpreting the Word. Under the spell of an extremely mechanical idea of inspiration, which made the sacred writers themselves as mediums of revelation little more than blind instruments, it is certainly true that in earlier generations the methods of Bible study were one-sided by the exclusion of this human side. In our day the tendency is often to the opposite, and the extreme emphasis put upon a principle in itself correct has led to the exaltation of the human element to the detriment of the divine, sometimes even reducing the latter to a minimum. Analyzed to bottom facts, it is just here where what the late Professor Delitzsch called "the deep chasm between the old and the new theology" is to be found.

While it is recognized as fixed and settled that for the material contents of the New Testament the writers were not indebted to the thought or literature of their age, but to the spirit of inspiration, it is equally certain that the shape and manner in which this revelation was given and formulated to a great extent was conditioned by this thought. Being supernatural truth revealed to human minds, it of a necessity assumed such a form that those for whom it was in-

tended could understand it. And just in this particular the literature between the two Testaments, as the expression of the religious thought of Israel, renders most valuable service, as can be illustrated by a few examples.

The prelude of St. John's Gospel contains the deepest of Christological thoughts. Its leading idea is that the Logos, who from eternity existed with the Father, had entered the world and become flesh. The general truth here made prominent is thus the eternal pre-existence of the Logos. The vast strides here made over and beyond the Messianic promises of the Old Testament are at once apparent, and it is difficult to see how a reader of this majestic prelude with only the Old Testament before him could have understood or appreciated the grand revelation. This becomes possible only when at the hand of the literature under consideration we see that the contemporaries of St. John had become familiar with similar ideas and views. Although conservative exegesis has always been a unit in teaching that the predictions of the Old Testament clearly ascribe to the coming Messiah a supernatural personality and work, and has seen in such passages as Micah 5: 1-5; Isaiah 4: 2; Daniel 7: 13, proofs of the pre-existence of this Messiah, and although, further, neither in word nor idea has the Logos of John any connection with the Logos of Philo's philosophy, but is rather a development from Old Testament premises, yet it is clear that John's method of expressing this deep idea is not taken from Old Testament models, nor is it intelligible from Old Testament thought and words merely. As John, like the other writers, used the language and the rhetoric of his day, as he wrote primarily for his contemporaries, it scarcely admits of any doubt that in presenting his grand truth he put it into a mould and form not shaped after Old Testament models, but in those constructed by the people in the centuries between Malachi and the appearance of Christ.

A glance at the literature of that era shows how common it was for the religious writers to describe persons and things that occupied an important position in the kingdom of God as pre-existent before Jehovah from eternity and as being brought down into the world at the proper time and for the

proper purpose—a line of thought which, it is clear in most cases, was suggested by the Messianic interpretation of Daniel 7: 13. In the second part of the book of Enoch, chapters 37–71, entitled The Parables, and written about the beginning of the Christian era, we have probably the highest theological and ethical conception of the Messiah written by uninspired pen without the New Testament as a basis or source of information. Here an eternal pre-existence is also predicated of Him. In chap. 48: 3 we read: “And before the sun and the signs were created, before the stars of heaven were made, His name was called before the Lord of the spirits.” Also in chap. 48: 6: “For this purpose He was chosen and hidden before Him [God] before the world was created, and He will be before Him to eternity.” Similar views are found chap. 48: 7; 62: 6, 7; 52: 9 (*cf.* Andover edition of Enoch, p. 46 sqq). Essentially the same ideas are found in IV. Ezra, a Jewish product of the first Christian century, or of even an earlier date. There, e. g. chap. 12: 31, we read: “*Hic est Unctus, quem reservavit Altissimus in finem;*” also chap. 13: “*Ipse est, quem conservat Altissimus multis temporibus,* *cf.* also 14: 9. Just as is done in Enoch, this pre-existing state is described as being hidden, e. g. 13: 52: *Sicut non potest hoc vel scrutare vel scire quis, quid sit in profundo maris, sic non poterit quisque super terram videre filium meum, vel eos qui cum eo sunt, nisi in tempore diei.* In the same way other sacred persons and even things are described as pre-existent. Thus in the *Assumptio Mosis*, 1: 4, Moses speaks of himself as *qui ab initio orbis terrarum praeparatus sum*. In the Apocalypse of Baruch we read of Jerusalem that the city “*preparata fuit ex quo cogitavi ut facerem paradisum et ostendi eam Adamo priusquam peccaret.*” In the book of Jubilees, a haggadic production of the first Christian century, we read that the angels celebrated the Sabbath before the creation. In the *Assumptio Mosis* we read of the temple: “*Repones [libros] . . . in loco quem fecit ab initio creaturae orbis terrarum.*” The pre-existence of the Law is one of the leading doctrines of Jewish theology in the New Testament age. *Cf.* Weber’s *Theologie des Talmuds*, p. 15, 153, 190 sqq. This form of thought was adopted by early Christian writers and was used by them extensively. *Cf.* quotations to

the point from patristic literature given in Harnack's notes on *Pastor Hermas*, 2: 4, and II. Clem. 14: 1.

But the advantage of a closer study of the inter-Testament literature for New Testament exposition is by no means quite confined, or even principally confined, to such details in the manner of expressing revealed thought. On the contrary, its greatest benefit lies in the light which it sheds on leading and fundamental problems of New Testament interpretation. It is well known that the Judaism of the time of Christ was by no means an honest development from Old Testament premises. While ostensibly still the theology of Moses and the prophets, yet the system of the Pharisees was radically opposed to that theology. Christ came into antagonism to the official theological teachers of the day, simply because He found that they had departed from the landmarks of the old covenant, substituting in their place dogmas and doctrines of foreign origin. His reformatory work consisted in the attempt to lead this thought back again into the channels of revealed truth; hence His conflict with the Pharisees. When looked at more closely it will be seen that the points of divergence and difference were chiefly two, namely, the carnal conception of the Messiah and His kingdom, and the object of the law as being an end in itself and not the means to an end, i. e. righteousness by the law. The process of the origin and genesis of this thought in Israel, although it cannot be traced in all its ramifications in inter-Testament literature, yet its leading characteristics and many of its details can be found. In this respect such works as the so-called Psalms of Solomon, written shortly after the conquest of Jerusalem by Pompey, 46 B. C., are extremely instructive. In the pages of the New Testament the Jews in opposing Christ's claim to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises, seem almost to quote the words of this lyrical collection. Plainly and openly a justification according to works (17: 9-12), a "justification of deeds" (14: 1) is taught. In 9: 9 the essence of New Testament Pharisaism is expressed in the words that "he who doth righteousness gathereth to himself eternal life; but he who does evil is the cause of his own destruction." The Messiah is entirely a mighty earthly ruler, who destroys the

enemies of Israel and exalts His people. The unclean and foreigners shall be removed from Zion; the Messiah shall be the new king in Jerusalem, to which place all the saints of the Diaspora shall be gathered. Israel is the first nation, and the others shall be merely drawers of water and hewers of the stone for the favored few. In this way shall be realized the hopes of those who, according to the book of Enoch, "had expected to be the head, but had become the tail." In the light of the views expressed in works of this kind, the historical background of the whole New Testament is seen with remarkable clearness; the *status controversiae* in the Gospels and the Acts are intelligible as historical phenomena; the great argument of St. Paul in favor of righteousness by faith alone, to which he devotes the substance of at least two of his greatest epistles, Romans and Galatians, is seen as to its cause and is better understood as to its character. For, understanding the view which he intends to combat, his counter arguments become all the clearer.

These illustrations could easily be increased. But it is evident from what has been said that the literature in question does much to put the New Testament theology into its proper setting. The thought of the age, of which this literature is the best expression accessible, must be a valuable tool in the apparatus of the New Testament student. The principle of historical interpretation finds in it a good auxiliary, the legitimate use of which cannot fail to help clear up more than one exegetical enigma.